

SUBJECT: Revising certain provisions of the rural veterinarian incentive program

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Kuempel, Paul, Burns, Cole, Howard, Raney
0 nays
5 absent — Bucy, Burrows, Clardy, M. González, Lalani

WITNESSES: For — Tamra Walthall, Texas Veterinary Medical Association
(*Registered, but did not testify:* Judith McGeary, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance; J. Pete Laney, Texas Association of Dairymen; Stacy Sutton Kerby, Texas Humane Legislation Network; Katie Jarl, Texas Pets Alive; Jodi Long, Texas Veterinary Medical Association)

Against — None

On — Charles Contero-Puls, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
(*Registered, but did not testify:* Andy Schwartz, TAHC)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that the rural veterinarian incentive program could better serve its intended purpose by allowing program participants to enter into agreements with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and permitting out-of-state veterinary college graduates to apply to participate in the program.

DIGEST: CSHB 2026 would amend provisions of the Education Code pertaining to the rural veterinarian incentive program.

Rural veterinarian incentive program committee rules. The bill would amend the rules the veterinarian incentive program committee was required to consider to include rules establishing preferential treatment within the selection process for applicants who:

- were Texas residents;

- graduated from a Texas high school or general academic teaching institution; or
- graduated from a Texas accredited college of veterinary medicine.

Eligible Veterinary Student or Graduate. The bill would remove the requirement that a student graduate from a high school or general academic teaching institution located in Texas in order to achieve eligibility for the program.

Financial support and commitment to practice in a rural county. The bill would replace the requirement that a program participant enter into an agreement with the university system, instead requiring that the agreement be made with THECB. Accordingly, any financial support received under this agreement would be required to be used for loans, tuition, and fees to a college, rather than the university system.

Definitions. The bill would revise the definition of a college of veterinary medicine by removing the condition that such a college was located in Texas. The bill would also revise the definition of a rural county by increasing the maximum population of such a county from 100,000 to 150,000.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2023.